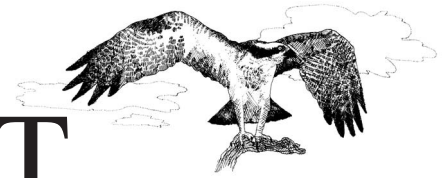




The Wildlife ENTHUSIAST



The quarterly newspaper designed to enrich the experiences of Tennesseans who boat on our waters and who enjoy hunting, fishing, trapping, observing, feeding, photographing, and watching the wildlife in this state.

SPRING 2004

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

Sandhill Crane Event Best Yet!

Information and Education staff from across the state came to assist in the still growing 12th Annual Sandhill Crane and Cherokee Indian event held each February at the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge and the nearby Birchwood School.

"This event has really evolved over the past decade, and as a result of the effort the agency devotes to the project, it has become more sophisticated and demanding. That means it takes more people to accommodate an event of this magnitude," said Dan Hicks, Region III Information and Education Coordinator.

Each year nearly 6,000 people drive from all over to enjoy a lecture series and related displays and vendors at the school and more than 10,000 sandhill cranes at the refuge.

Visitors to this year's event were treated to an expanded display in the new educational building at the refuge that included an elk and fisheries display and a big screen TV pumping live close-up video from a remote camera fitted with a 2400 mm lens and a wireless audio and video system allowing fantastic pictures for the visitors inside.

In addition to the cranes and displays,

the two-day event featured a lecture series dedicated to the area's rich wildlife diversity and paying tribute to the

winter grounds in Florida. As a result of the success in the growing population of sandhill cranes, the most endangered crane in the world, the whooping crane, has been introduced into this flyway by teaching the route to captive raised yearling whooping cranes flying behind ultralight airplanes.

The Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge has played a major role in the population growth in sandhill cranes, and during the past three years it has also served as a resting point for the whooping crane project and now free-ranging whooping cranes are using the refuge during migration.

"The event is publicized nationwide and draws wildlife watchers from young to old to

the TWRA Hiwassee Refuge, making the event the largest nongame event involving the agency," Hicks added. "We could not have pulled it off without the help of TWRA people from all over the state."



Some of the more than 10,000 sandhill cranes that showed up for the event.

thousands of Cherokee Indians who passed through the area during the Cherokee removal and those who made the local area their home prior to the 1830s.

Dr. Fred Alsop, a professor at East Tennessee State University and a noted bird expert, was one of the presenters during the morning session.

Mike Abram, a Cherokee Indian Heritage expert, was featured with other related presentations in the afternoon series.

During the past decade, thousands of migrating sandhill cranes have used the area around the refuge as a resting point on an annual journey from their nesting grounds in the Great Lakes area to



TWRA Executive Director Gary Myers keeps an eye on Hiwassee's sandhill cranes



Region II Non-game biologist Polly Rooker and Anita Swafford work one of the displays at the 12th Annual Sandhill Crane event.

2004 Sport Fishing Regulation Changes

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission approved the following changes to the sport fishing regulations. These changes will be implemented on March 1, 2004.

Statewide Sport Fishing

- Established a sport fishing season for paddlefish from April 24 to May 31. The daily creel limit is 2 fish per day with no size limit. Culling, the releasing of a harvested fish, is not allowed. (Note: The sportfishing season and regulations for paddlefish on Cherokee Reservoir are unchanged.)

Reservoirs Sport Fishing

- Pickwick Reservoir—15-inch minimum length limit for largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. Five bass daily limit (any combination). Tennessee waters only.

- Center Hill Reservoir—Removed 12-inch minimum length limit on spotted bass.
- Parksville Reservoir—4-inch minimum length limit for largemouth bass.

Agency Lakes Sport Fishing

- Bridgestone/Firestone Centennial Wilderness WMA ponds – Statewide fishing regulations apply, fishing during daylight hours only, continue “kids only” regulation.

Streams Sport Fishing

- Hiwassee River (Apalachia powerhouse to Patty Bridge)—14-inch minimum length limit for brown trout, 2 fish daily limit. Does not affect current quality trout fishing area regulations.
- Caney Fork River (Center Hill Dam to Cumberland River)—18-inch minimum length limit for brown trout, 2 fish daily limit.

- Doe Creek (Old Cabin Private Road downstream to Roan Creek)—Closed to grabbling, grab hooking, snatching, tubbing, archery, spear-gun fishing, dipping, or gigging. Cast netting is permitted.
- Roan Creek (Mountain Lakes Estates Bridge downstream to Doe Creek)—Closed to grabbling, grab hooking, snatching, tubbing, archery, spear-gun fishing, dipping, or gigging. Cast netting is permitted.
- Watauga River (NC state line downstream to Dry Hill Road Bridge)—Closed to grabbling, grab hooking, snatching, tubbing, archery, spear-gun fishing, dipping, or gigging. Cast netting is permitted.

Free Fishing Day—June 12, 2004!

It will soon be that time again for all ages to sample the joys of fishing throughout the state without having to invest in a fishing license.

Why do we have Free Fishing Day?

There are two primary reasons and the first is easy. We hope that the end result of this fun experience will create new anglers who will eventually buy fishing licenses. And fishing licenses, along with the federal reimbursements from excise taxes on fishing gear, account for a big portion of the revenue used to operate the TWRA.

The second reason for having a Free Fishing Day is a little more intangible. By exposing people to the pleasures of fishing

and the outdoors, we hope that they will become more interested in and concerned about what happens to the wildlife and natural resources of our state, in this case the fish and their aquatic habitats. This interest may then lead them to becoming better stewards of these resources, perhaps even participating with the TWRA on an informed basis in the resource management process.

A long shot? Maybe. How did *you* learn to love the outdoors and its inhabitants?

Actually, the point of this article is to encourage anyone who wants to get involved with a Free Fishing Day event, either as an organizer, assistant, sponsor

contact, or even as a sponsor, to do so. We've had phenomenal events throughout the state every year, thanks to incredible efforts by the TWRA staff.

Again this year, each region will receive \$3,000 from the Aquatic Education budget to spend on their events. Regional I&E Coordinators or Free Fishing Day Coordinators are giving out these funds by either dividing it among areas or by each event. In addition, each region is allotted over 5,000 each of fishing coloring books and sport fish ID booklets and about 4,500 bobbers and plastic litter (goody) bags.

Hunters Help Protect Wild Turkey Resource

Hunters play a vital role in managing and protecting the natural resources of the state. Not only do hunters provide the funding for wildlife management through the purchase of hunting licenses and equipment, but they also keep a watchful eye on poaching activities that are detrimental to wildlife. One common poaching problem across the state is hunting wild turkeys over corn or other types of bait.

As hunters are scouting prior to and

during the hunting season, they should be on the lookout for baited areas or even individuals poaching before the season opens. Be on the lookout for blinds built before the season. Blinds may be constructed from brush, logs, or other natural materials. Inspect the inside of the blind to see if the leaves are scraped away or packed down. This may be an indication that someone is hunting before the season opens.

If you find something that looks suspicious, report it to the TWRA.

In addition to a reward offered by the TWRA, the Tennessee State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation also offers a reward of up to \$300 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of poachers. Information received is kept in the strictest confidence.

Winter Trout Stocking Provides Good Fishing

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency has stocked rainbow trout in four Region III small lakes in hopes of creating early excitement for the spring fishing season.

Located across the region, Lake Junior in Chattanooga, and small lakes at Athens Recreational Park, Cumberland Mountain State Park near Crossville, and Oneida City Park provide unique winter fishing opportunities from new anglers learning how to fish to veteran fishing enthusiasts.

Lake Junior can be found at the Chickamauga Dam where the access is located off of Amnicola Highway near the intersection with Highway 153 and is a cooperative effort with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

This is the second year for the Lake Junior program and has generated a lot of interest after opening in January, when TWRA stocked 3,000 rainbow trout raised

at the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service hatchery at Dale Hollow. Plans are in place to stock an additional 2,000 nine-to-twelve inch fish this month from TWRA's Flintville Fish Hatchery in Middle Tennessee.

Fishing at Lake Junior is allowed Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during daylight hours through May 2, 2004, for trout and requires an Annual Trout License (Type 22) in addition to the Annual Hunting and Fishing License (Type 01). The 2003 combination Hunting and Fishing license will expire on February 29, 2004, and new licenses went on sale at TWRA License Agents across the state on February 18, 2004.

Anglers may use canoes without motors on Lake Junior. Canoes must be carried from the parking lot. TVA police patrol the area and open the gate at dawn and close it at dusk.

In addition to Lake Junior, Cumberland Mountain State Park, Oneida City Park, and the City of Athens Recreation Park were stocked with rainbow trout from the Dale Hollow Hatchery and all of these small lakes have a creel limit of seven trout per person per day with no bait restrictions and statewide regulations apply.

Cumberland Mountain State Park in Cumberland County and Oneida City Park in Scott County are in their second year of stocking and this is the first year for the winter trout program at the Athens City Recreation Park in McMinn County. All of these three small lakes are open year round.

Free Fishing Day events are planned at these lakes on June 12, 2004 and this and other urban trout fishing locations across the state of Tennessee can be found at the TWRA website at www.tnwildlife.org.

Percy Priest Anglers Have 100 TWRA Stake Beds To Fish

The TWRA fish crew working Percy Priest reservoir has had a busy winter driving some 5,000 wood stakes into the lake's bottom in preparation for the spring and anglers in pursuit of fish attracted by structures.

This marks the third winter that the crew has added man-made structure to the lake, bringing the total number of stake beds to about 100, according to TWRA Fish Biologist Todd St. John.

"Most of the stake beds have about 100

stakes in them," noted St. John, "but there are a few larger beds with about 150 stakes."

The stake beds are easy to see now because Percy Priest is drawn down to its winter pool. However, most of the wood stakes will disappear this spring as the lake's water level reaches its summer pool.

"Anglers will be able to find the stake beds by looking for a painted PVC pipe that rises above the beds and the water surface," said St. John. "We put those toward the back of most of the beds."

Stake beds can be found primarily in the upper portion of Percy Priest from Hobson Pike Bridge up into the East and West Forks of the Stones River and into Fall and Spring creeks.

In addition to stake beds, TWRA also has 21 additional fish attractors—mostly cedar brush—spread in various parts of the impoundment. Those fish attractors have been in Percy Priest for many years and can be found by locating buoys illustrated with a fish and hook.

Percy Priest "Benches" Designed For Smallmouth Spawning

In an effort to give Percy Priest smallmouth bass a little more advantage when it comes time for them to reproduce this spring, the TWRA has created spawning benches to provide cover for the fish.

Smallmouth bass favor gravel bottoms when they spawn, but often their preferred spawning areas are absent of substantial structure.

"Quite a few of the islands in Percy Priest have good gravel on the lake bottom

that surrounds them but they lack structure," TWRA Fish Biologist Todd St. John said. "We built benches around them and expect smallmouth to orient to them this spring."

About 100 spawning benches are now in Priest. The benches are made of two wood boards laid atop concrete blocks. Out of water they look like hastily made park benches.

"Research has shown that smallmouth will use benches, and we hope that will

help them with reproduction," said St. John. "This is something we have done on other lakes in Tennessee and we're giving it a try now on Percy Priest."

Most of the benches can be found on the lower half of the lake from Hobson Pike Bridge down toward the dam. That body of water tends to be the coolest and subsequently provides the best conditions for smallmouth bass.

Watch Ponds For Algae Problems

Spring is the time of year ponds frequently experience algae problems. With the weather warming and days becoming longer, conditions for algae growth and algae problems in small ponds are increasing.

According to TWRA Fisheries Biologist Dave Rizzuto small ponds may experience a number of problems in the spring. Fish in ponds may die due to diseases, water chemistry problems, or serious algae conditions.

"There are two main groups of algae that

can be harmful," Rizzuto said. "Filamentous algae is a long, stringy algae and blue-green algae forms a light green, frothy mat on the surface of the water. Both of these types should be treated chemically to eliminate the problem," Rizzuto said. "A common misconception is that fertilizing the pond will take care of the algae, but fertilizer may just make it worse by accelerating growth of algae already present. The algae needs to be killed first, and then the pond should be fertilized. Chemical treatments for farm ponds are

available at most Farmer's Co-ops."

Fish diseases and chemical problems, especially low oxygen levels, often cause fish die-offs in small ponds. Rizzuto says that if fish of just one species are dying and they are dying a few at a time, it is probably a disease causing the fish kill. If fish of several different species die overnight, it is probably a water chemistry problem.

For further assistance with farm pond problems, contact your local Agricultural Extension Agency or your TWRA Regional Office.

TWRA Now Leasing Spring Fields For Dove Hunting

TWRA is now leasing dove fields from landowners for its Public Dove Field Program. Farmers can earn up to \$2,500 for preparing a dove field for public hunting.

TWRA began its leased dove field program in the late 1980s and the program has been very successful in providing quality-hunting opportunities for hunters. In addition to leased fields, many public dove fields are provided on wildlife management areas in each TWRA region.

Mourning doves are one of the most widely distributed and abundant birds in North America. Mourning doves are also a popular game bird being hunted in 36 of the lower 48 states, and more individuals are harvested than all other migratory bird species combined.

In Tennessee about 111,110 hunters harvested more than 2 million mourning

doves last year.

TWRA leases three types of dove fields: spring-leased fields, improved silage fields, and traditional fall-leased fields

Spring-leased fields are planted in grain (sunflowers, millet, wheat, etc) and managed specifically for doves with no grain being harvested. The landowner plants the field and mows it before the season opens. These fields will be available for a minimum of three priority hunt dates in September. The rates for spring-leased fields are \$100 per acre for a maximum field size of 25 acres. The total maximum paid per contracted field is \$2,500.

The standard fall-leased field is a harvested grain or hay field to which TWRA leases the hunting rights. Rates paid to landowners for traditional fall leased fields will be \$40 per acre for a maximum field size of 40 acres for a total

contract of \$1,600 per field.

Improved silage fields are harvested silage fields with some additional grain left to provide additional grain to attract doves. TWRA will lease 40-acre harvested corn silage fields for \$40 per acre (up to \$1,600). The farmer will also be paid \$1,000 to leave four acres of grain standing in the field. Total maximum payment per improved silage contract is \$2,600 per field. The farmer will cut or mow the standing corn two weeks prior to the opening day of dove season (as directed by the Regional Small Game Biologist).

For more information contact:

Region I—Jackson (800) 372-3928,
Region II—Nashville (800) 624-7406,
Region III—Crossville (800) 262-6704,
Region IV—Morristown (800) 332-0900.

Boater Registration Renewal Now Available Online

Boat owners now have a quick and easy way to renew their registration. All that is needed to take advantage of this service is the current boat registration number and a Visa or MasterCard.

Boaters can log onto www.wildlifelicense.com, click on the "Tennessee" link and they will be connected to the TWRA license and registration page. From there, they should click on the "Images" link and select the "Boat Renewal" option on that page.

Boat owners will then be asked to enter information about themselves.

After the file is accessed, boat owners can see when their current registration expires and view the options for renewal. Registration can be renewed even if it has not yet expired. However, the length of the registration time period cannot exceed three years. To clarify—a boater who has one year left on the registration could purchase a two-year renewal, which would equal three total years on their registration.

Boat registration cards and decals can only be mailed to the address TWRA has on file. If you have moved since you last registered, call TWRA to update your

address before using this web site.

Boaters who renew their registration online will be charged a \$3.95 convenience fee. After submitting payment, users can print the confirmation page (the last page) as a receipt for their records. This page can also be used to go boating until the decals and card arrive in the mail.

If boaters experience problems with the web site, or if the decals and certificate of registration do not arrive within seven business days of placing the order, they can call the number listed on the web page for assistance.

TWRA Enforcement Chief Sonny Richardson Honored

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency Law Enforcement Chief Sonny Richardson was honored recently in Reno, Nevada, as the "Conservation Officer of the Year" by the Safari Club International (SCI).

During its 32nd Annual Hunters Convention, held January 21-24 at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, SCI bestowed Richardson with its highest conservation accolade, citing him as the top enforcement officer worldwide.

"The contributions made by Sonny have been incalculable," said SCI Foundation President Gary Bogner. "His efforts have redefined what it means to help keep wild species vibrant."

Chief Richardson has served with the TWRA for over 30 years in a law enforcement capacity. His first assignment in 1973 was with the former Game and Fish Commission as an officer in Lincoln County. After a transfer to Cheatham County where he still resides, Sonny distinguished himself as top officer, garnering the Shikar Safari Wildlife Officer of the Year award for Tennessee in 1979. He served as an Assistant Area Supervisor and Area Supervisor for law enforcement before taking present duties as Chief in 1999.

Gary Myers, Executive Director of TWRA, added, "Sonny is the picture of a

model officer. His integrity and professionalism as Chief have taken the Enforcement Division to a new level. We're very proud and happy for him to have received this prestigious award."

Safari Club International is the leader in protecting the freedom to hunt and in promoting wildlife conservation worldwide. The nonprofit association is a tireless advocate for the world's 45 million sportsmen and sportswomen, who, through legal hunting, annually generate more than \$1.7 billion in funding to maintain wildlife populations, conduct research and enforce wildlife laws.

Four Johnson County Men Convicted Of Poaching

Four men from the Furnace Creek Community of Johnson County, charged with a variety of poaching activities, recently appeared before Judge Hawkins in Johnson County General Sessions Court.

Jeffrey Denney, age 31; Lonny Taylor, age 47; Justin Taylor, age 22; and Bud Forrester, age 29, plead guilty to 29

charges related to illegally killing, possessing and transporting four deer and two wild turkeys.

Through the investigation, wildlife officers with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency seized three vehicles and four firearms that were used in the commission of the crimes.

The four men plead guilty to the

charges and were ordered to pay \$4,626 in fines and court costs. In addition, they paid \$1,200 in restitution for the four deer and two wild turkeys. The three vehicles were forfeited to the state and the four firearms were declared contraband by the court. All four individuals lost their hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for five years each.

International Paper To Keep Some Land Open To Public

International Paper will continue to allow public hunting in several southern Middle Tennessee counties, but has decided to lease about half of its timber property to hunters beginning this year.

Last year International Paper sold hunting permits for property in Chester, Decatur, Hardin, Henderson, Hickman,

Lawrence, Lewis, McNairy, and Wayne counties. This year, permits will be available for 28,000 acres of land, but only in Lewis, Hickman, and Wayne counties.

"We are working with International Paper to lease land that will be kept in the public hunting lands program," Region II Manager Steve Patrick said. "However, a

little more than half of its property will now be leased privately."

Hunters who want to lease property from International Paper can write the company for more information at: International Paper, PO Box 1060, Waynesboro, TN 38485.

Hunter Safety Cards Can Now Be Replaced by License Agents

One of the most frequent calls to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency offices is a request for replacement of lost hunter safety cards. Since 1985, Tennessee law has required anyone born on or after January 1, 1969, to possess proof of satisfactorily completing a hunter safety course before hunting any species in the state.

Because those people are required to carry their card to show proof of comple-

tion of a hunter safety course while hunting for the rest of their life, TWRA has added replacement cards to the machines at hunting and fishing license agents. This will make replacement of lost cards much faster and more convenient for the hunters.

For a fee of \$5, the agent will look up the information verifying completion of hunter safety and give the person a receipt that is immediately valid to use. Within a couple of weeks the hunter will receive a plastic card

from the TWRA's Nashville office.

TWRA is in the process of posting information on those who have completed the hunter safety course over the past several years. If a hunter goes to a license agent for card replacement and they cannot find them on the system, they should contact the nearest TWRA office and the information will be looked up and added to the system so that the agent can replace the card.

Bluebird Planning Time

Are you looking for an indoor project to occupy your time in these last days of winter, or perhaps something that can help wildlife and add a little color to your property? The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency would like to suggest that you consider building some bluebird nest boxes to erect this spring.

Each year in the late winter, one of Tennessee's most attractive songbirds begins to look for suitable nest sites. In February and March, bluebird pairs seek out hollow cavities in decaying trees and wooden fence posts to nest and raise their young.

Eastern bluebirds were one of the first birds to appear around the homesteads of Tennessee settlers. During the 1800s and 1900s, hollow wooden fence posts were plentiful and bluebirds had an abundance of nest sites, but today's metal fence posts have

eliminated many potential sites. Luckily, help for the bluebird is as simple as building or buying a bluebird box and



placing it 5 to 10 feet off the ground in a fairly open area.

Construction of a bluebird box is easy. Boxes should be made of untreated wood.

They should have a cavity 8 inches deep with a floor 5 inches wide and 5 inches long. The entrance should be 6 inches above the floor and the entrance hole should be 1½ inches in diameter.

Other beneficial birds, such as chickadees and wrens, may take up residence in a bluebird box. House sparrows may be a real problem when boxes are located near buildings.

Bluebirds are territorial, so boxes should not be located within 100 yards of each other. Bluebirds prefer open fields like those of farm pastures, parks, cemeteries, or golf courses, but any large grass field or yard will do. Bluebirds rarely use nest

boxes in densely wooded areas.

If you would like to assist one of Tennessee's most beautiful wild creatures, put up a bluebird box.

Quail Unlimited Offers Incentive Payments And Free Seed For CRP Practices

The Tennessee Quail Unlimited State Council (TN QU) is offering an incentive and free seed to landowners who implement certain management practices on their current Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) native grass acres. Landowners in twelve West Tennessee counties are eligible to receive a one-time \$10 per acre incentive payment on certain CRP contracts. These practices include strip disking, strip herbiciding, prescribed burning, and legume interseeding, and are cost shared by the USDA. Eligible counties include: Benton, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Fayette, Gibson, Haywood, Hardeman, Hardin, Henderson, Madison, and McNairy.

The incentives are a joint effort of Quail Unlimited, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, USDA-NRCS, the Chickasaw Shiloh RC&D Council, and a grant obtained from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. In addition to the incentive payment, participating CRP landowners will be eligible to receive

enough free legume seed from Quail Unlimited to plant up to a maximum of five acres under the legume interseeding practice. Other West Tennessee counties may also have a limited supply of legume seed, so please check with your USDA Service Center for details.

Funds for the incentive payments and free seed are limited. Interested CRP landowners must first apply at the Natural Resources Conservation Service office in the eligible counties. The Quail Unlimited incentive funds will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted. Participation in this program will require a contract modification to existing CRP contracts.

"Native grass acres in CRP are already helping bobwhites and rabbits make a comeback in some West Tennessee areas. Mid-contract management practices like strip disking will help CRP landowners improve their grassland for wildlife, and landowners can receive cost share from the USDA," Mike Hansbrough, NRCS Private

Lands Wildlife Biologist said.

Jim Pierce, TN QU State Council Chairman added, "The West Tennessee Quail Unlimited chapters have been very active in helping educate landowners on the CRP, native grasses and wildlife, have helped them obtain discounts on native grass seed, and have distributed free food plot seeds to numerous landowners. We feel the \$10 per acre incentive for these management practices, coupled with the existing 50 percent practice cost share from the USDA, will substantially reduce any costs to interested CRP landowners and greatly improve wildlife benefits."

Since the TN QU incentive funding and seed are limited, landowners are encouraged to immediately apply through their local USDA Service Center in the selected counties.

For more information, contact Mike Hansbrough, USDA-NRCS Biologist (731-668-0700 EXT. 112), or Chris Moyers, Chickasaw Shiloh RC&D Council, (731-668-0700 EXT. 103).

TWRA Avid-Hunter Survey Participants Needed

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency is continuing its annual Small Game Avid Hunter Surveys. Information submitted through this survey is vital in helping TWRA manage small game populations and provides more useful information back to you, the concerned hunter. We have four avid hunter surveys that we rely on hunters to provide data: quail, rabbits, grouse, and woodcock. We would appreciate if you would take the time to log in all your hunts this fall, successful or not, and return the postage-paid cards at the end of the season. Further instructions for completing the survey cards are printed on the back of the card. Hunter Survey cards are available at each TWRA regional office or by mail.

If you are interested in participating in one or more of the surveys, contact your regional TWRA office or Tim White in Nashville at: (615) 781-6616 or e-mail at: Timothy.White@state.tn.us. Participants in this year's survey will receive a cap with survey logo and a survey cooperator pin (if available).

Below are summaries from the previous hunting season. Thank you for your cooperation, and have an outstanding year pursuing Tennessee's fine upland game species.

2002-03 Avid Hunter Survey Results

QUAIL

Statewide quail hunting success in 2002-03 was up significantly, (18%), based on covey flushes per hour. Harvest figures were up as well. Flush rates are at their highest level since the 1995-96 season. Quail populations have increased or stayed the same during the past five years. Quail populations still remain at low levels, largely driven by loss of agricultural lands and non-quail friendly farming practices.

Region	Coveys Per Party Hour	Change From 2001-02	Harvest Per Party Hour	Rating
East TN	.33	Up 15%	.57	Poor
Plateau	.50	Up 28%	.57	Poor
Middle TN	.47	Up 19%	.73	Fair
West TN	.59	Up 15%	.97	Excellent
Statewide	.50	Up 18%	.78	Good

RABBIT

Statewide rabbit hunting success during the 2002-03 season decreased 4% from the previous year but has increased 17% over the last three seasons. Hunter success this year was rated excel-



lent. Rabbit hunting success was best in Middle TN and good in the other regions as well. There was virtually no difference in hunting success between months during the season. An interesting note, rabbit hunting success on private lands was approximately 37% higher than on public lands.

Region	Rabbits Per Party Hour	Change From 2001-02	Harvest Per Hour	Rating
East TN	1.25	Down 16%	.52	Excellent
Plateau	1.20	Down 2%	.50	Excellent
Middle TN	1.92	Unchanged	1.01	Excellent
West TN	1.61	Up 8%	.82	Excellent
Statewide	1.60	Down 3%	.79	Excellent

GROUSE

Overall grouse abundance during 2002-03 appeared to have decreased 12% from the previous year as the average flush rate fell from .68 to .60 flushes per party hour of hunting. Three counties (Hamblen, Hancock, and Unicoi) reported flush rates of over 1.0 grouse flushed per hour. Flush rates and total harvest per party trip were significantly higher in the East Region. Hunter participation was consistent during December, January, and February, while flush rates were consistent throughout the season. Approximately 60% of the hunts and 43% of the grouse harvest occurred on public lands, highlighting the importance of public lands forest management to the welfare of grouse and grouse hunting in Tennessee. The highest public lands success was on Cherokee WMA, and Royal Blue WMAs.

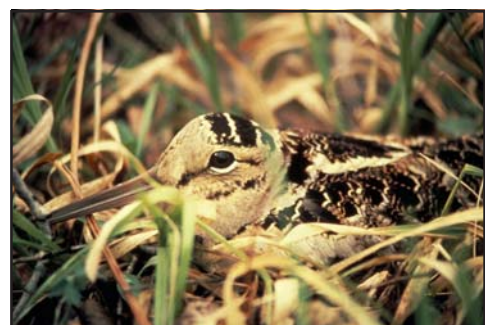
Region	Flushes Per Party Hour	Change From 2001-02	Rating
East TN	0.29	Down 64%	Poor
Plateau	0.74	Up 36%	Fair
Statewide	0.60	Down 12%	Fair

n/a = no grouse hunting west of I-65

WOODCOCK

During 2002, woodcock hunters averaged .15 birds flushed per hour of hunting, a 58% decrease over the previous season and slightly below the 10-year average. The best flush rates were in October at .21 flushes per hour; the peak of migration typically occurs during mid-November. Approximately 28% of the harvest occurred during the week of November 14. It has been observed during previous years with very dry fall weather that the woodcock do not seem to linger here as long during their migration, making them harder to find and lowering hunting success. The dry, hard soils likely make difficult foraging by woodcock for earthworms, their main diet component.

The dry weather occurring during fall 2002 probably contributed to the marked decrease in hunter success. Claiborne, Hardeman, and Hardin counties reported the best hunting success.



TARP Proves Popular

The Tennessee Angler Recognition Program, initiated on January 1, 2003, recognizes anglers for outstanding fish catches made from Tennessee waters.

Anglers who catch fish that meet or exceed pre-determined minimum sizes for any of 22 different species of fish earn trophy fish certificates for every qualifying fish registered. Each certificate features artwork by wildlife artist Joseph R. Tomelleri depicting the species of fish caught.

Fish species included in the program begin as small as bluegills, brook trout and rock bass, any of which need to be 10 inches long to qualify for recognition. At the opposite end of the spectrum, striped bass and muskellunge must measure at least 40 inches in length.

Species listed represent both warm-water fish that big lakes produce and cold-water fish caught mostly in mountain streams and lakes.

In addition to trophy fish certificates, the TWRA awards two levels of Master Angler recognition for anglers who catch and register multiple noteworthy fish. Anglers who catch five or more qualifying fish in any combination of species earn a separate certificate and patch designated as Master Angler, Level 1. Catching five different species of trophy fish earns a Master Angler, Level II certificate and patch.

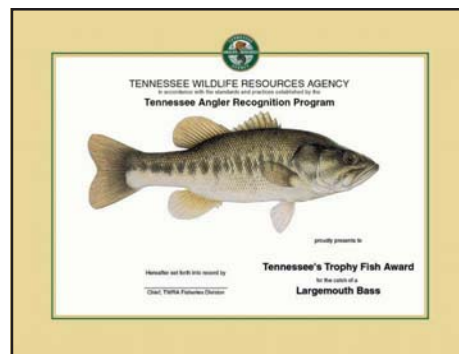
Beyond giving anglers credit for their accomplishments, the program will help TWRA biologists figure out where trophy-class fish of various sorts most commonly come from. That information, which in the long term will show trends by species and by locations, will provide an extra tool for TWRA biologists to use as the agency

seeks to better manage fishery resources.

During 2003, the first year of the Tennessee Angler Recognition Program, a total of 159 trophy fish certificates were given for 19 species of fish. In total awards, white crappie and smallmouth bass headed the list with 31 each, followed by largemouth bass (21), striped bass (20), and blue catfish (13). No entries were sent in for white bass, common carp or lake trout. Anglers released 58 percent of their trophy fish.

Waterbodies where most trophy-fish were caught include farm ponds (15), Kentucky Lake (12), Watts Bar (11), Chickamauga (8), Lake Barkley, Old Hickory (7) and Woods (7) reservoirs.

For trophy-fish qualification, a fish either needs to be measured in front of a witness or a photo must be taken of the fish laying on a measuring tape or board. Measurements should be taken with the fish lying flat on the tape or board, with its mouth closed and its tail lobes squeezed together. For photo verification, the photo must be included with the angler's application. All applications must also include a \$5 processing fee.



Minimum Trophy Fish Lengths			
Species	Length (inches)	Species	Length (inches)
Largemouth Bass	22	Walleye	28
Spotted Bass	18	Muskellunge	40
Smallmouth Bass	20	Brook Trout	10
Striped Bass	40	Brown Trout	26
Cherokee Bass (Hybrid)	30	Rainbow Trout	24
White Bass	18	Lake Trout	28
Crappie (Black or White)	14	Channel Catfish	30
Bluegill	10	Blue Catfish	34
Redear Sunfish	11	Flathead Catfish	34
Rock Bass	10	Common Carp	34
Sauger	20		



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